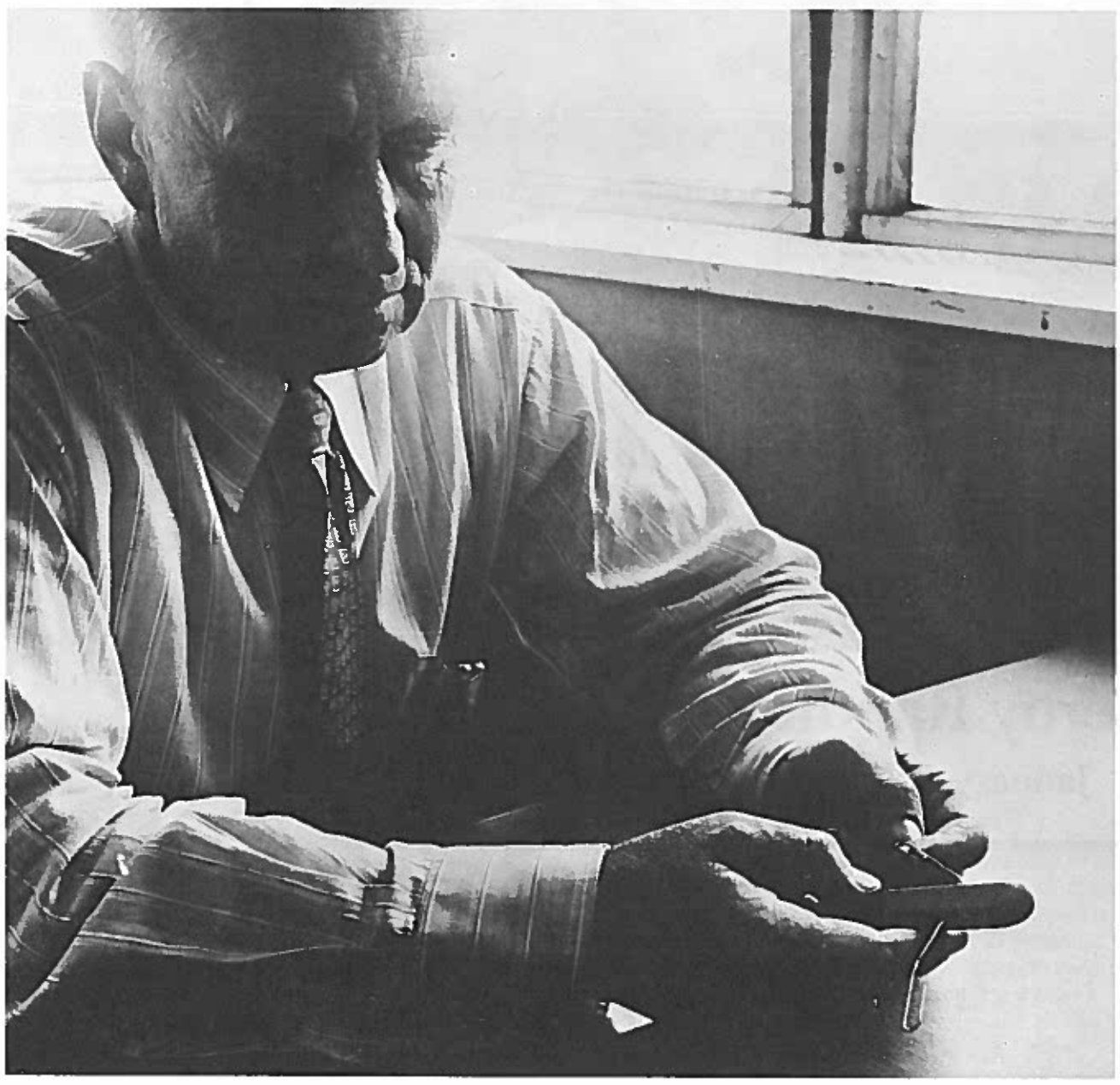
Leroy Randle Grumman

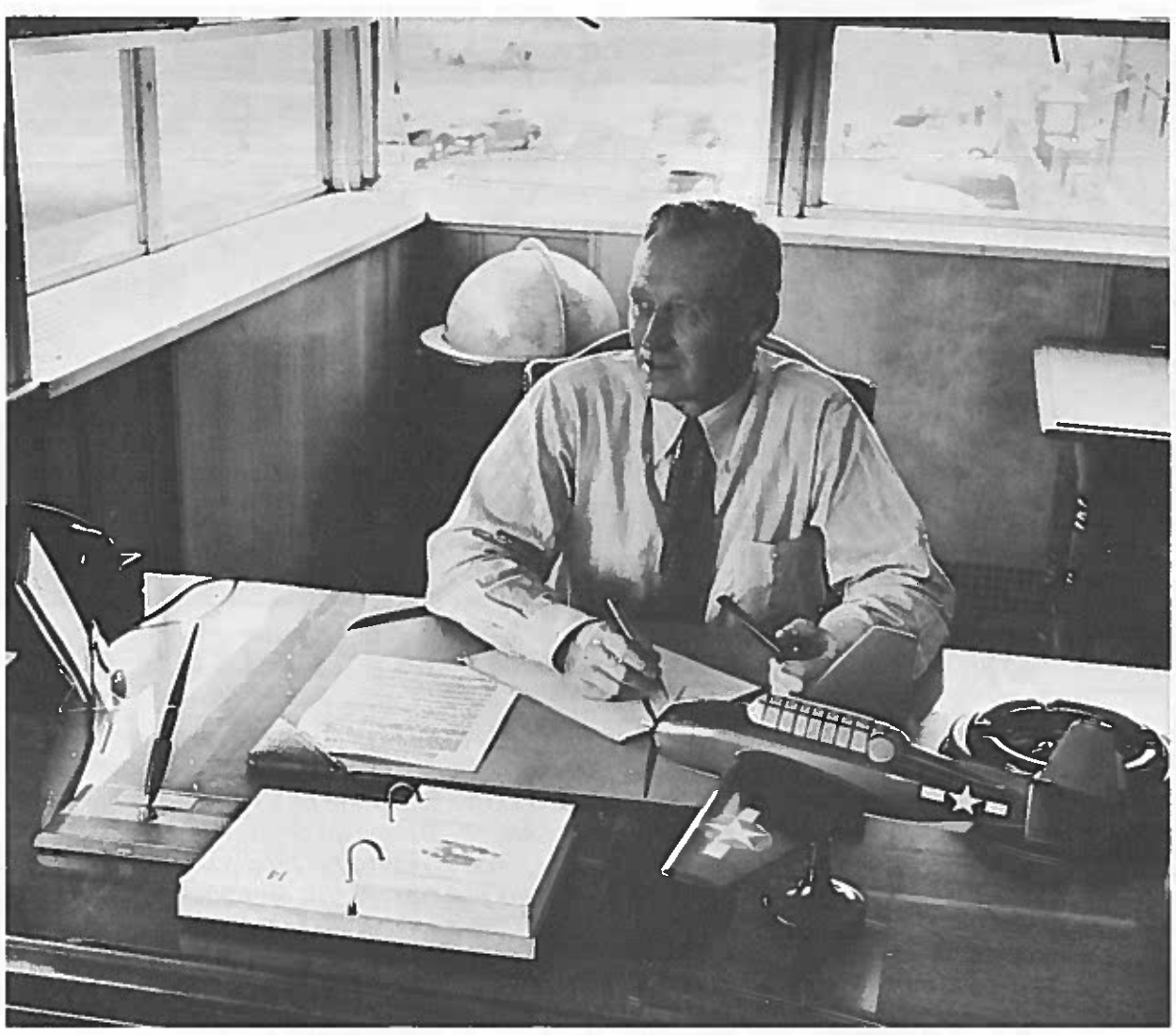
January 4, 1895 - October 4, 1982

A pilot, an engineer, in all things a perfectionist...



"When you're alone 5,000 feet in the air, lots of things about a plane become important that you can overlook on the ground."

— Leroy Randle Grumman in *Time* magazine, Sept. 11, 1944



The intuitive engineer. *Throughout his career, Roy Grumman possessed a formidable talent for getting to the heart of any engineering problem.*

A pilot, an engineer, in all things a perfectionist; his name is on the door of a company that never forgot his insistence on quality and integrity.

On Monday, October 4, 1982, Leroy Randle Grumman died at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset after a long illness. He was 87.

As one of the founders of the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and its first chairman and president, his devotion to excellence guided the company from its beginnings in 1930 and remains its heritage today.

Grumman was born on January 4, 1895, in Huntington, New York, to New England carriagemaker George Tyson Grumman and Grace (nee Conklin) Grumman. He attended Huntington public schools and worked his way through Cornell University. He graduated from Cornell in 1916 with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering.

Early dreams

Shortly after the United States entered World War I, Grumman enlisted in the Navy and fulfilled a boyhood dream: he became a pilot. While serving as project engineer and test pilot at the League Island Naval Yard near Philadelphia, he met aviation pioneers Albert and Grover Loening.

After he left the Navy in 1920, Grumman went to work for the Loenings at their little plant on New York's East River, building amphibian aircraft. He met Jake Swirbul and Bill Schwendler at Loening, and a powerful alliance was formed.

When Loening was bought out by Keystone Aircraft in 1929 and a move to Pennsylvania was announced, Grumman had no wish to leave Long Island. He was married to Rose Marion Werther Grumman and they were raising their family here. Grumman, Swirbul, and Schwendler decided to remain on Long Island and start a company of their own. Joined by Clint Towl, Ed Poor, and Joe Stamm, they opened their doors for business on January 2, 1930, in a rented garage in Baldwin.

Swirbul was a dynamic leader and manager,

known to everyone as just "Jake." Leroy Grumman was Mr. Grumman: formal, reserved, even shy -- but with formidable talent for getting to the heart of any engineering problem. He once described how he solved the problem of making a safe airplane with wings that folded:

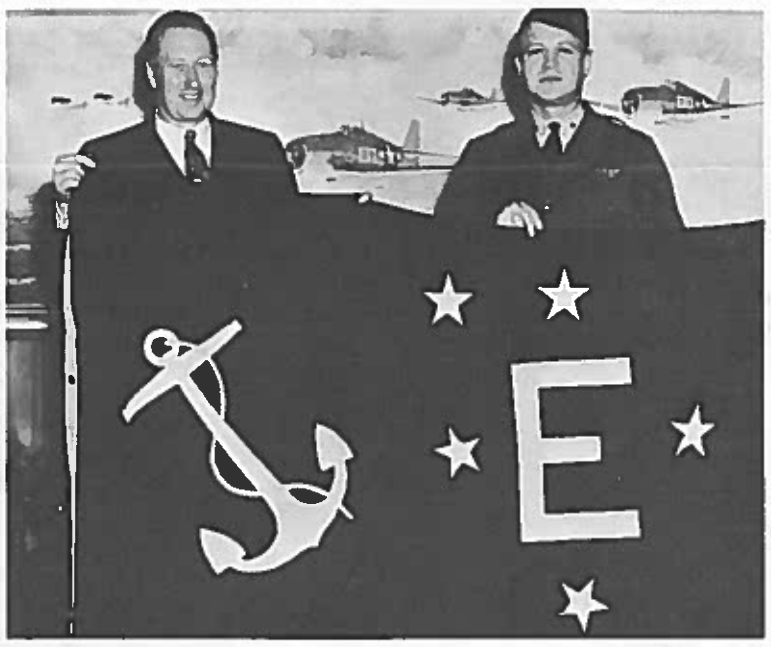
"Well, other planes had folding wings that folded upward at the tips and if they weren't properly locked when the plane took off it would get about 10 feet in the air and the wings would fold and the pilot would be killed. I tried to get a design that wouldn't do that. The idea was safety. Once you got in the air with these they wouldn't collapse --that was the idea. I had an eraser and two paper clips which I just stick in and got 'em so the wings, instead of folding upward, folded back... right beside the body. We used it on the F4F-4, and the Hellcat and the Avenger."

The innovation permitted a 50 percent increase in the number of planes an aircraft carrier could accommodate.

Although Grumman never envisioned his company growing beyond 250 employees, it boomed during the 1930s and '40s to meet the Navy's demands for Hellcats, Wildcats, and Avengers. In March 1945, with 22,100 people on the payroll, the company set an all-time national production record with 664 military planes.

In tribute to the quality of the planes the Bethpage company was turning out, Rear Admiral John S. McCain told a Washington labor conference in 1942, "The name Grumman on a plane or part has the same meaning to the Navy that 'Sterling' on silver has to you."

The founder of the Grumman Iron Works apparently agreed with the maxim that anything



A job well done. *Roy Grumman was a peace-loving man who preferred building amphibians to warplanes, but in 1942 his country called and he and his small company answered. The Grumman production corps won the coveted Navy 'E' award for production efficiency five years in a row. Above, Grumman accepts the fifth Navy 'E' flag from Cdr. Samuel Randall. At left, in his Plant 1 office during World War II, Grumman sat across from Jake Swirbul. Over 160 models hung overhead. Whenever a question arose over the design or size of almost any plane in the world, Grumman clambered on a desk and found the model.*

worth doing is worth doing well, because he built everything -- not just airplanes -- to last forever.

His daughter, Marion Phillips, describes this trait in Richard Thruelson's book *The Grumman Story*:

"We had a picnic table out in the backyard, and Mother got Daddy to go out one Saturday and fix it up. He spent quite a lot of time out there, hammering and sawing away, and then he came in and invited us out to see his handiwork. He had rebuilt the whole table. It looked strong enough to hold an elephant."

Into the jet age and beyond

In 1946, a year after the end of the war, Grumman stepped down from the presidency, but remained as chairman of the board. For the next 20 years, he led the company into the jet age and then the space age. At the time of his retirement as chairman in 1966, his company was building the vehicle that took the astronauts to the moon -- the Lunar Module. He remained as a director until 1972, and was honorary chairman of the board at the time of his death.

Through his long career, Leroy Randle Grumman won many awards and honors. He received the Presidential Medal for Merit -- the highest civilian award -- in 1948 from Secretary of Defense James Forrestal; that same year he also received the Daniel Guggenheim Medal for pioneering in aeronautics. In May 1968, he became the first recipient of the National Academy of Science's Hunsacker Medal for his contributions to aeronautical engineering. He is enshrined in the Long Island Hall of Fame and the Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohion.

Yet in spite of his remarkable achievements and the honors bestowed upon him, Grumman remained modest and self-effacing. When asked to spin tales about the secrets of his success, he declined. His wisdom, his personal and business philosophies, were summed up in his products: he saw no need to embroider his own history.

In 1970, in the final interview he gave to *Plane News*, Leroy Randle Grumman was asked what he had to say about his company on its 40th anniversary.

He answered in seven words: "We tried to do a solid job."

Grumman is survived by his wife Rose Marion Werther Grumman and four children, Mrs. Ellis L. Phillips, Jr., Mrs. Florence Hold, Mrs. Allen Nelson, and David Leroy Grumman.

United front. *In 1940, Roy Grumman and Jake Swirbul (R) stood proudly next to the new G-44 Widgeon. They shared the same office. Early in their careers, they decided never to leave the office until they resolved their problems. The daily eyeballing paid off handsomely; Grumman's company set numerous production milestones in World War II -- such as building 664 airplanes in one month (March 1945).*

TIME covers a hard-headed realist

Grumman really *was* a legend in his own time. On September 11, 1944, the man who made Hellcats was on the cover of *Time* magazine. The Business and Finance section carried a seven-page story about him and the company he ran with "hard-headed realism."

Some excerpts:

"The father of the Hellcats is a medium-sized, 49-year-old man. He has a pink face, seamed with hundreds of tiny wrinkles, sharp, bright blue eyes, sandy red hair and the twanging voice of a New England storekeeper. He is stoop-shouldered and extradordinarily shy, moves about as if he hopes no one will notice him.

"...He spends his evenings reading, drops in on neighbors with his wife, or plays bridge -- with men if possible. He thinks women 'talk too much.'

"...He has a small-towner's taste in clothes, usually wears blue-striped shirts and striped ties. He is particular only about his shoes, which must have thick, crepe-rubber soles (he bought ten pairs just before World War II began). These bulky sneakers are easy on his feet as he shambles over the acres of plant floors.

"...There is nothing of the big business tycoon about Roy Grumman in his office. As soon as he he gets there, he takes off his coat. Then he props his feet on the desk or an open drawer, puts a pipe or cigar in his mouth, and is ready to make all the Hellcats the Navy needs."

Teamwork. *Four of the six company founders — Jake Swirbul (L), Roy Grumman, Bill Schwendler (2nd R) and Clint Towl (R) -- confer during the early 1950s in Plant 5.*

Mourning the loss of a 'gentle genius'

"All of us at Grumman are saddened by the death of the man who gave this company its name and so much of its heritage. Leroy Grumman's name and his dedication to excellence will continue to live in the company he founded. It's up to us to keep dedication alive so that the name 'Grumman' will always command the respect it deserves." — **Jack Bierwirth,** *chairman-Grumman Corporation*

"I met him when I was a young engineer working on a proposal for what became the F11F, and then again later on when the plane was in flight test. We were having a problem with the trim and he called me in to talk about it. Because he was a pilot himself, he insisted on a strong flight test organization. He established a standard of excellence that set the pattern for the whole company." — **Joe Gavin,** *president-Grumman Corporation*

"We are all deeply saddened by the passing of Roy Grumman. He once told me that he never wanted to see the company grow too large because it might lose the family spirit he thought so necessary to our success. Fortunately for us, that was one of the few things Roy Grumman was wrong about. That family spirit that he talked about is, happily, still with us even though we have grown much larger than he ever envisioned. He has left an indelible mark on Long Island. He was born here; he lived here; and he died here. And his name will always be a centerpiece of Long Island's heritage. We will miss him but we will never forget him." — **George Skurla,** *chairman and president-Grumman Aerospace Corporation*

"Roy Grumman was an unusual engineer. He was a brilliant aeronautical engineer -- and an astute businessman. You rarely find a combination like that. Though Roy and Jake Swirbul had different personalities, they made a marvelous team. Neither one went home at night without them both reaching a decision. The next morning, you'd ask either Roy or Jake what the decision was -- and you'd get the same answer. Roy Grumman deserves a lot of credit for what the company is today." — **Clint Towl,** *a company founder and director emeritus of Grumman Corporation*

"He was a quiet man with a dry wit. For instance, he decided to take his first flight in a Hellcat. After the flight, he taxied back to Plant 4 with the landing flaps down. The pilots had a kitty; they contributed $5 every time they goofed. They wanted Mr. Grumman to ante up $5 for the landing flaps. He replied, "I don't think leaving the flaps down is worth $5. But here's $10 for the things I did in the air that you didn't see." — **George Titterton,** *former senior vice president-Operations*

"I was saddened to learn of the passing of Leroy R. Grumman. Those of us in the Navy who have been so closely associated with carrier aviation and with Grumman aircraft over the years, know the lasting contribution he has made to carrier aviation and to the defense of our nation.

"A naval aviator in World War I and a pioneer and innovator in carrier-based naval aircraft development, Leroy Grumman was a giant and will be sorely missed." — **John Lehman,** *secretary of the Navy*

"It was with profound regret that we in the Atlantic Fleet learned of the death of Mr. Leroy Grumman. His great contributions to aviation, and particularly to naval aviation, are legendary and have kept the Navy on the leading edge of aviation technology. From the early days of World War II to the present, his unsurpassed standards in design and quality have been major factors in maintaining U.S. naval superiority on the world's oceans. We in the Navy share your loss." — **Wes McDonald,** *Admiral, U.S. Navy commander in chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet*

"Mr. Grumman had great rapport with the Navy. He was open, honest, and possessed a strong desire to do the right thing for the customer. This, in turn, rubbed off on others at the company. He never wanted to be in the forefront; he tried to avoid publicity. He was quiet and reserved; he was a good listener and easy to talk to. He was a great engineer...respected by many...and now missed by many." — **Dick Hutton,** *former senior vice president of Engineering*

"Roy Grumman had a very creative mind. He was an understanding man, a gentleman...and a man who was not afraid to delegate authority. He was a great executive...he let people do their jobs. We'll miss him." — **Jack Rettaliata,** *former vice president of Public Affairs, Grumman Corporation*

"We all loved him. He was a marvelous leader. We will remember him as a very, very smart engineer, one who was an inspiration to all of us...from early in the game right until his retirement. Everyone will mourn his passing." — **Bob Hall,** *former vice president of Marine Engineering*

"We both shared an interest in verticraft...planes that could fly fast and then hover like a helicopter. That was years ago...long before it became popular. Mr. Grumman could look into the future like that. My fondest memory is flying our favorite aircraft the Widgeon in the early Fifties. On the way back from Cornell University, he and his wife Rose sat in the cockpit. Mr. Grumman made a perfect landing at Bethpage. It was the last time he piloted a plane. How he enjoyed flying." — **Hank Kurt,** *former Grumman test pilot and VTOL coordinator*

"Leroy Grumman was a giant among the pioneers of the aerospace industry. Probably the most significant of his accomplishments are the Grumman-built Lunar Module stages which remained on the moon's surface, marking man's first journeys to another planet." — **John P. Clarke,** *president, Eaton Corp.-AIL Div.*

"On behalf of all of us at United Technologies and especially Pratt & Whitney, I would like to extend sincere sympathies on the death of Leroy Grumman. His many friends here will long remember him as one of the giants in the aviation industry. He was indeed a gentle genius and a man who made history. The quote in today's New York Times that the name Grumman on a plane is like sterling on silver is a well-deserved tribute. — **Harry J. Gray,** *chairman and president, United Technologies Corporation*

"We at the Fairchild Republic Company join with our Long Island neighbor, the Grumman Corporation, in mourning the passing of one of the aerospace industry's greats, Leroy R. Grumman. Under his leadership the Grumman Corporation produced a wide range of aerospace products, ranging from a family of legendary fighter planes for the U.S. Navy, to the Lunar Module that landed American astronauts on the moon. To all Long Islanders, the Grumman Corporation is regarded as a concerned, generous and community-minded organization - the epitome of an industrial good neighbor.

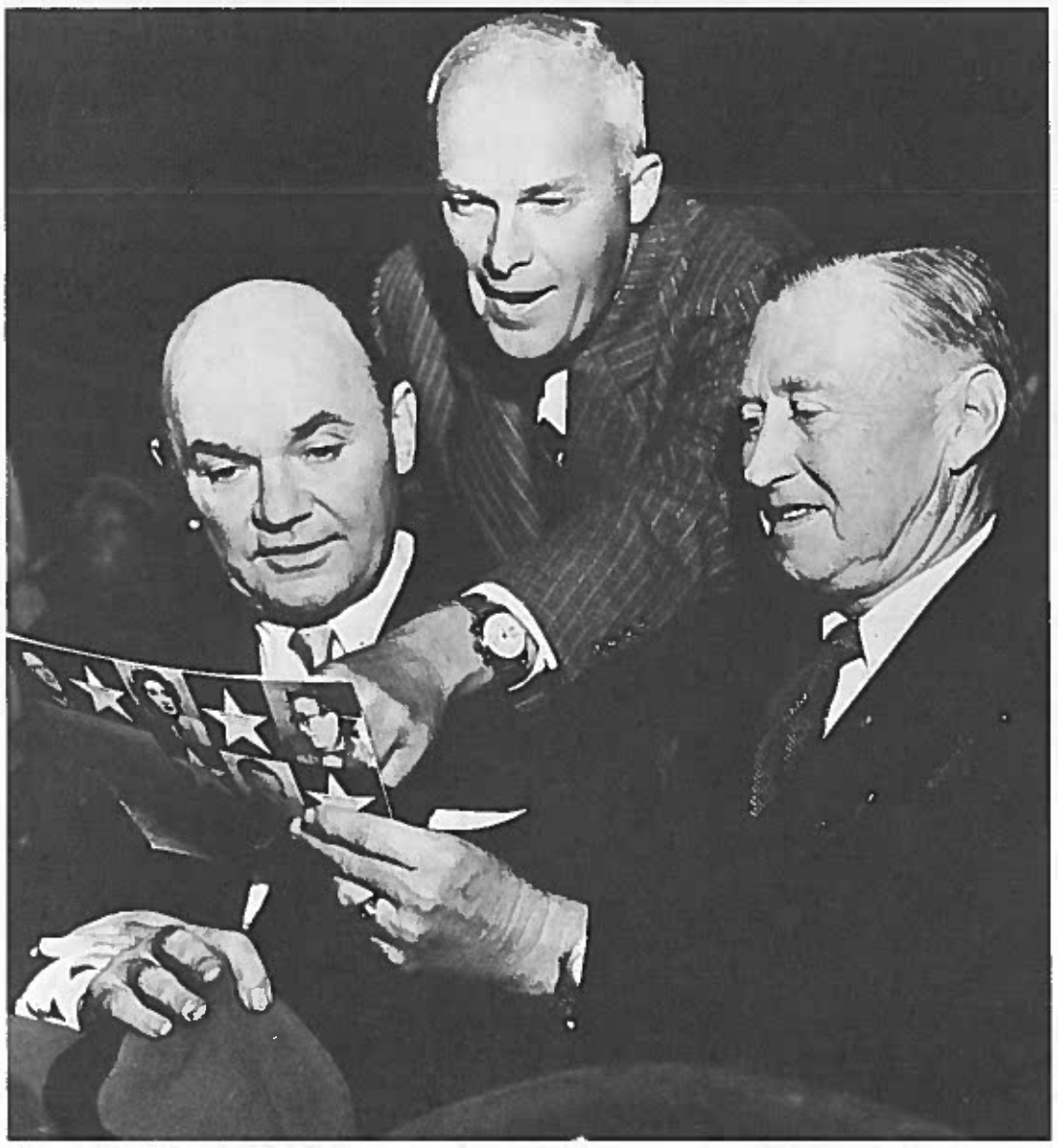
We are pleased to have been associated with Mr. Grumman. We are confident that his ideals will continue to be a driving force for the company and Long Island."—**Donald B. Rassier,** *president, Fairchild Republic Company*

"Mr. Grumman was relieved when I came in 1939 and started making his weekly trips to Washington for the company. He never cared much for the wheeling-dealing. On my first trip to DC, I found out how the name Grumman opened doors with the Navy. In fact, the reputation that Mr. Grumman built for the company in the Thirties provided the rest of us down the line with the key to Washington." — **Oscar Olsen,** *the company's first electrical engineer and "man in Washington"*

"Mr. Grumman was a good man...a quiet, very unassuming man. He was not the demanding type of boss. He was confident that you could do the job. He answered his own phone and made his own calls. He was a great man who will be missed by many." — **Lillian Schleicher,** *Roy Grumman's secretary in the early 1960s*

"Leroy Grumman, in his distinguished career, earned a permanent place in the history of the American aerospace industry. Both his technological innovations - such as the first Navy production aircraft with retractable landing gear and folding wings — and the company that bears his name stand as permanent evidence of what he contributed." — **Sanford N. McDonnell,** *chairman and chief executive officer, McDonnell Douglas Corp.*

"It is with deepest sympathy and respect that the Northrop Corporation and its employees note the passing of Leroy R. Grumman, aviation pioneer and founder of the Grumman Corporation. Leroy Grumman's contributions to the history of aviation and the defense of America and her allies have been countless. His ability to design and successfully manage the production of tens of thousands of fighter aircraft played a major factor in America's success in World War II. Leroy Grumman was one of the last of the giants who built the dynamic U.S. aerospace industry." — **Thomas V. Jones,** *chairman and chief executive officer, Northrop Corp.*



A rare night on the town. *At the 1950 Star Night, a fund-raiser for Long Island community services and hospitals, Roy Grumman, Jake Swirbul (L) and Bill Schwendler (C) checked out the star-studded line-up. The Grumman-sponsored Star Night was the frontrunner of today's United Way on Long Island.*

In memoriam

In lieu of flowers, the family of Leroy Grumman requests that donations be made to the following foundations:

The American Diabetes Association, Long Island Chapter, 401 Broadhollow Road, Melville, N.Y. 11746.

The N.Y. Association for the Blind, The Lighthouse, 111 East 59th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022.

School days. *Leroy Grumman (second R) was only 16 when he graduated from Huntington High .*

To imitate the flight of birds

Leroy Grumman was only 16 years old in 1911 when he graduated from Huntington High School as Salutatorian. When he stepped up to the podium on that warm June night, the subject of his address was "The Aeroplane."

Here are some excerpts from his speech:

"Man has always wished to imitate the flight of birds, that he might leave the ground, to which he seemed to be confined, and rise freely in the air. Even in the middle ages there were chronicled attempts of men to fly.

"...The final perfection of the aeroplane will be one of the greatest triumphs that man has ever gained over matter. Themistocles said: 'He who shall make himself master of the sea is destined to become master of the land.' If power over the sea will do so much, of how much more importance will be the power over the air, which extends over both land and sea, and breaks down the barriers between all nations."

At home in sea and air. *Roy Grumman was a family man who loved the sea almost as much as the air. In the late forties, he could be seen on the Manhasset Bay in a Grumman-designed canoe with his daughter Mrs. Ellis Phillips, granddaughter Valerie Phillips and his son David.*

A memorable occasion. *Seated behind Mrs. Mary Skurla (L, foregound), the mother of GAC President George Skurla, and John Collyer, a former member of the Grumman board of directors, Leroy and Rose Grumman watched the takeoff of Apollo 13 on April 11, 1970. The Grummans were married on March 19, 1921.*

GRUMMAN plane news

SPECIAL MEMORIAL ISSUE

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